



My Autobiography

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Completed January, Nineteen-hundred and thirty-one

MY
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER I

MY BIRTH--EARLY LIFE

MY FATHER--BORN IN IRELAND--THRICE MARRIED

THE CHILDREN

HIS CHARACTER

AGE AT DEATH

I was born of Irish descent December 10, 1848, on Big River, Concord Township, Washington County, Missouri, five miles north of Caledonia and ten miles south of Potosi. In this community I lived till maturity, never having traveled from home over twenty miles. I was reared on a farm and attended such schools as existed in those pioneer days.

My father was born in Ireland not far from Dublin, perhaps in that city, and came to America when he was twelve years of age, landing in New York. He was of Scotch-Irish stock. He had the Irish brogue and many of the peculiarities and characteristics of the Irish race. Tall or rather medium in height, angular, and withal a good face. In disposition gentle and kind, but when aroused, fearless and unafeard. He was industrious, temperate, economical, a good provider, and an indulgent, wise father. He was born in 1800 and died February 9, 1864, being sixty four years old. He was buried in the old Methodist cemetery a short distance north of Caledonia, Missouri. His first name was John. He had no middle name. He was a Christian after the Methodist sort.

I have no information as to the time or under what circumstances my father joined the church. I know from my earliest recollection that he was a regular attendant at the services of the church and a consistent Christian. Furthermore, he was a class leader in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, quite a long time. In the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 he adhered to the Southern Methodist Church and remained in it the rest of his life. I can bear this testimony of my father's character: I never heard from his lips a word, nor saw a single act of him, not in strict keeping with the character of a Christian and a gentleman. And he died as he lived--a good man.

He was married three times and was the father of eighteen children. His first marriage was to a woman by the name of Estes. Of this I am not sure but think it is correct. By this union I only know of four children--there might have been others. One died early in life, the other three lived to be quite old and are dear to my memory. They had gone out of the

old home made by my father and their mother when I was born. Being next to the youngest of nine children by my father's marriage to my mother I know nothing of their youthful life. I only know them after they married and had homes of their own.

They were indeed to me true brothers and sister. They came often to see us. Many happy hours did I spend in their homes. Their names were James, John, and Mary Ann Robinson. The one that died was named Andrew. James married a Miss Elsie McCutchings; John married a Miss Jamison; and Mary married a man by the name of Ashlock.

My father's second marriage was to a Miss McMurtry who was my mother. There is a tradition that her mother had been betrayed by her lover, a man by the name of Aldridge. She afterward married a Mr. Thomas Harris. My grandmother, if I mistake not, was a sister to Aunt Polly McMurtry of the Thomas Chapel neighborhood. Aunt Polly was the mother of Will, Bruce, Harvey, Albert, Eliza, and Ella McMurtry. My mother had a sister named Clementine and two brothers, John and Rasmus Harris.

By this second marriage there were nine or ten children. I think one or two died in infancy, but of this I am not sure. I only know of eight: William, Thomas, Joseph, Robert, and Alexander; Ester Jane, Eda Elisabeth, Francie Theodosia, and Zilah Malissa--four brothers and four sisters. William married Miss Margaret Fourshy; Joseph married Miss Lucy Yeargan; and Robert married Miss Julia Greeia. My wife was Miss Josephine Elinor Sloan. I should record the names of the children but cannot remember them all. All my brothers except Robert have crossed the bar. Since writing the above Robert has died.

Edna, Jane, Malissa, and Robert sleep in the Methodist cemetery near Caledonia, Missouri with my mother and father. I am the second from the last youngest of my father's children by mother. Joseph sleeps in the cemetery in the Westover settlement northeast of Irondale; Docia in some St. Louis cemetery by her second husband, Mr. Frank Daugherty.

CHAPTER II

MY MOTHER

I have but a faint recollection of my mother. I remember seeing her only once. She was sitting in a chair by the old kitchen fireplace, and I was squatted by her side or at her knees with my head in her lap. Her position before the fire is with me as I write, but her face is gone from me. I cannot recall how she looked. One other time I remember of her calling me from the flax patch to get clean clothes in order to go to church. In those days most every family raised flax and manufactured their own linen.

The circuit riders rarely preached at our place on Sunday. They came only once every month and preached on weekdays. We always went to church. My mother called me in to get ready. A boy is truly fortunate to have a good mother. I am sure I had a good mother although I know but little of a mother's love. I remember one incident the day she died or it may have been the day she lay a corpse.

I had laid down in the shade of a walnut tree that stood in the back yard of our home and fallen asleep. The shade moved, and the sun shone in my face. Someone spread a handkerchief over my face and in doing so woke me. If I went to the cemetery I have no recollection of it. My mother's first name was Lavina. She sleeps in the old graveyard near Caledonia, Missouri. I do not remember, nor do I recall, any incidents of the days following her death. I can recall but little that happened in the next four years at the end of which my father married my stepmother and brought her to our home. After my mother's death, my sisters kept house and cared for the small members of the family.

CHAPTER III

MY STEPMOTHER

My stepmother was in many respects a very remarkable woman. She belonged to an old Crawford County family by the name of Jamison. She was born and reared near Steelville, Missouri. Her name was Mary Jamima. She was a great talker and had a most wonderful memory--knew more people than any person I ever met. She was a great worker and withal very economical. After coming into our home she made all our clothes. I doubt if she had an equal. Jeans, linsey, cotton goods, carpets, and blankets were things in which she excelled and in which she took great delight. She was indeed a helpmate to my father.

She brought with her to our home three children by a former husband, Mark Hornsey--two boys and a girl; Christopher, John, and Ann. With my three brothers and three sisters, this made a family of ten children to provide for, which was no easy task. The younger children, that is my two older brothers and her two boys took to each other fine and became real brothers, but the girls did not get along together as well as we boys. My oldest brother, soon after my father's marriage to my stepmother, married. Soon afterward my oldest sister married also. It was not long after my brother and sister married until my other sister hired to a family to do house work. She always contended that our stepmother arranged the contract and made her go. I do not know how it was. Being so young I did not notice anything wrong. John and Chris and Ann, my stepbrothers and sister, feel as near to me as my own brothers and sisters. Ann is dead; and Chris and John are living in Palestine, Texas. My stepmother lived to a good old age and sleeps somewhere in Texas.

My stepmother had four children by my father only one of whom is living. One died in infancy. Nora married a Methodist preacher by the name of Millis. Not long after this marriage Nora, as we called her, died, and Millis married again and is at this time living somewhere in Texas. George married a noble woman. They had two children, both girls, who are now residing in Fort Worth, Texas. George lived to be some sixty odd years of age. He died a year or so ago and sleeps somewhere in Texas.

Hattie Viola and myself are the only surviving children of my father's family. Hattie married Thomas Lightfoot. They have several children and live in Pineland, Texas. My brothers and sisters, except Hattie, are all gone, and I am left alone.

CHAPTER IV

SHOUTING RELIGION

I am sure that I am greatly indebted to my stepmother for much of what I am. She was a Christian after the Methodist sort. She rarely attended a revival that she didn't shout. In those days shouting at church was the ordinary and not the unusual thing, though everyone did not shout.

Our best men and women at times expressed their joy by great fervency and enthusiasm in prayer and testimony. Theirs was no cold and formal religion. It overflowed and spread out. They gave full vent to their emotions. After all is said, what is religion but joy in the Holy Ghost and delight in the service of God? When people are really happy they manifest their joy in some way. Some cry, some shout with a loud voice, some laugh, others are serene and quiet, yet they are full of joy and peace.

The Psalmist was so full of joy and gladness that he called upon the trees and the hills to help him praise God. To suppress our emotions continually is to dry up the streams of sympathy and tenderheartedness and eliminate the chief factor in Christian activity.

We do things under strong emotions that we would not do but for the fact that we labor under the strain of great emotional feeling. Emotion gives wings to our sympathy and love. What is emotion but feeling anyway? The New Testament saints overflowed with joy and gladness and gave expression of their joy with loud voices. All the New Testament voices are loud voices.

We find no practice or form of worship in the New Testament so staid or orderly as to exclude great demonstration of joy in the worship of God. At Pentecost the disciples and the thousands of new converts acted like drunk men as they praised God in the presence of the multitude.

Has God ever given the church any particular mode or manner of praising him--how loud or how low we should speak his praise? Does it matter whether we stand or sit still? What does it matter whether we cry with a loud voice or whisper his praise just so we worship him in the Spirit and understandingly? It is sincere praise that God delights in. He cares not for the manner.

But has anyone ever experienced a great joy without emotional demonstration? Joy and gladness cannot be hid. They will manifest themselves in some way. Gratitude is a plant that will grow and thrive under cultivation. It increases and enlarges by use or exercise. It can be crucified. My stepmother was a good woman. She had a right to shout.

THE CHURCH NOW AND THEN

There is a wide difference in the church services now and in my childhood days. Go into our churches now and one will find everything cold and formal. Everything is in cold storage. Our fathers and mothers on entering the church immediately began the services with song and prayer. They did not wait to begin at a set time nor till the congregation gathered--they began with a few. The service was informal. They had freedom and liberty and the power of God was present to heal. The worship was simple and sincere. They did not have to wait until the organist arrived. Everybody nearly could sing, and the singing was not artistic nor scientific, but free and joyful.

Most of the leading members of the church owned their own hymn book--the Methodist hymnal, too. Methodist people used Methodist hymns published by their own church. They did not run off after every Tom-Dick-and-Harry publisher in the country for their new song books. It is not so now. In many of our churches can be found all sorts of hymns. And the churches of today are entirely dependent on the choir. Congregations are often compelled to wait after the time to begin the services because the organist or pianist is late. In my boyhood days there were men and women too in the churches who could "pitch" the tune and lead the singing. Most everyone sang by heart.

CHAPTER V

EARLY RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS

From my earliest recollections I was religiously inclined. I do not remember a time when I was not seriously inclined toward religion. When but a little boy I was often sad and melancholy. I dreamed terrifying dreams which made me afraid after getting awake. One night I dreamed that my sister died and went to hell, hell being in the back yard of our home. I thought she and I had to carry old black charred logs with which to make a fire to burn her. I would dream that the world had come to an end. My sleep was disturbed by fearful sights and happenings, such as being carried away by bears and tigers and kidnapped by fierce, wicked men. I do not think these frightful dreams were caused by hearing harrowing and gruesome stories. I know my father did not tell ghost stories to his children.

I had great reverence for the preachers. They told us of the horrors of hell and the joys of heaven, but the hearing of these things was not the cause of the things above mentioned. When only seven or eight years old I had a longing to "get" religion and join the church. Then it was thought by most people that children of my age were not old enough to join the church. How any intelligent, sensible person could arrive at such a conclusion is more than I can see. At any rate this was the belief and the teaching, with few exceptions, back in my childhood. I wanted religion. As the custom was to come into the church by way of the "mourners' bench" I wanted to go to it and "get religion" but did not have any encouragement from any one. How long I carried this burden I do not remember. I was too timid to tell anyone my desires in the matter. Finally the opportunity came.

GOING TO THE MOURNERS' BENCH

In those days in nearly every community there were faithful local preachers who stood in the breach guarding and watching over the flock in the absence of the pastor. In our community there were two faithful local preachers who were mighty factors in keeping up the interest in the work of the church. These two local brethren began a protracted meeting, "big meeting," as it was then called, at old Lebanon, the place where both school and church were held. It was a great big log building. These preachers were often the butt of jokes by certain people of the settlement. It was "Old Davy" or "Uncle Davy" Kirkpatrick and "Old John" or "Uncle John" Campbell. Uncle John had a fair education and was a school teacher as well as a preacher. Uncle Davy did not have any education and made many mistakes in the use of the English language, mispronouncing a lot of words. These blunders, of course, afforded the fun-loving a lot of merriment. But he was a good man and mighty in prayer and in the scriptures. He was often heard praying in the secret place. In preaching he was vehement and enthu-

siastic. He had only a few sermons but many texts.

Uncle John was logical and exegetical in the presentation of the gospel. I owe much to these good men. I am sure I shall see "Uncle Davy" by and by and also his kinsman and collaborator, "Uncle John." But few of their progeny are living. Uncle Davy has one son living who at this writing is nearly ninety years old. Uncle John also has a living son.

The meeting above referred to went on for two weeks. It was a great revival in which many were converted and joined the church. One night my sister "got religion." She came "through" shouting and praising God. I was all broken up. I felt as though my heart would break. Oh, how I wanted religion! I was so overcome by a great surge of emotion I could stand it no longer in the house, so I ran out and around to one corner of the old log meeting house and cried like a baby. I do not remember how long I stood there.

The next night a little boy about ten years of age ventured to the mourners' bench and was converted. I think he was truly converted, too. The next morning at the breakfast table, speaking of this little boy's conversion, my stepmother remarked that she would like to see me--calling me by name--do as little Jim Small had done the night before. This was all I wanted. It was what I had waited and longed for. At the meeting that night, when the call for mourners was given, I went forward as quickly as I could.

There was not much stir or excitement that night. It was customary for the Christians to exhort and encourage the penitents, but I do not remember that anyone spoke to me about my soul. I suppose they considered I was too young. The meeting closed that night with the announcement that at the end of the week it would start again.

When the meeting started again, at the call for penitents, I went to the altar, the only one that did go that night. As I remember no one noticed me in any way. The next night when they called mourners I was on hand again kneeling on a split log bench still unnoticed by anyone. I felt very lonely and even to this good day a sense of that loneliness steals over me. The scene is as vivid in my memory after these seventy years as though it happened yesterday. The meeting closed that night and from that time on, no difference whose church it was or where it was, I never missed a single opportunity to present myself at the altar for prayer.

It may seem strange to people to this day of quick conversions and "hold up your hand" religion that I, a little boy of less than ten years of age, was seeking religion so long. But while seeking it I lived just like I thought a Christian should live.

JOINING THE CHURCH ON PROBATION

It was the custom in those days to take people into the Methodist Church on six months' probation. I joined the church on trial and from

that day to this my name has been on the church register. I have never at any time since the day I joined considered myself out of the church. It is true, however, that from the age of twelve to sixteen I was only a nominal Christian. I did some things on the Sabbath such as going in swimming and was twice enticed by my associates to go fishing on that day, which was considered by my father and Christians generally as a very grave offense. I have never sworn on oath in my life, nor since joining the church have I used bywords, but I fell into other habits very hurtful to mind and body of which I am ashamed even at this time.

"COMING THROUGH," "SEEKING RELIGION," "GETTING RELIGION"

These were the terms invariably used to describe the point of time when a person was converted and experienced the joy of sins pardoned. "Getting religion" in those days in many instances was a slow process. There were exceptions. Some sought for weeks and months. I recall the case of quite a number of men prominent in the community who sought religion several years before they became satisfied. Some of the most moral men I have known sought the blessing ten or twelve years. None of them ever turned back to their former life but they lived good Christian lives till death.

I have seen many who sought the pardon of their sins only for a short time "come through" shouting happy but in a short while turned back into the world. Still I have seen many quick conversions remain true to the end. I am persuaded that this long time seeking pardon is not necessary provided one is well instructed in regard to the conditions or terms of salvation.

There are but few persons who can in a short time come up to the point where they lose sight of self and make a full and complete surrender to God and by faith take Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord in the consciousness of sins forgiven.

The heart of man is obdurate and stubborn, selfish and rebellious in the extreme. It is difficult for a self-respecting and decent man to get away from his good deeds and his morality--to renounce them as having no merit and accept Christ by faith alone. Man is innately self righteous. Invariably he puts merit in his decent life and good deeds. But none of these things count in our approach to God. A consciousness of utter undone-ness and helplessness must be felt in coming to Jesus Christ. The moral man invariably fails to have a proper conception of the sinfulness of his sins. His sins rest lightly upon him.

But the chief hindrance or obstacle that keeps the moral man from entering into life is his pride and unbelief. Nothing so dishonors God as unbelief. The most difficult thing for me to do when I was seeking religion was to believe that God did for Christ's sake forgive me of my sins just now--in this moment. I contended for the witness of the fact of pardon before I would believe. I wanted the joy of pardon as an evidence that

God in Christ had spoken the truth when he said, "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned but is passed from death unto life." God's plan instead of my plan must be carried out.

GOD'S PLAN

God's plan is: (1) Fact. (2) Faith. (3) Salvation. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." I wanted to feel before I believed. For nearly two years I lingered along in the darkness of unbelief, refusing to accept the salvation that was nigh unto me and which I might have had in a moment of time. I did not think I was much of a sinner. Neither did I have a just conception of the nature of sin nor of the sacrifice that God had made to "take away the sin of the world." I was ignorant of many things. I carried a New Testament with me and read it a great deal but did not understand it. I often went alone into the woods and got on my knees and prayed to the heavenly Father.

CHAPTER VI

SOME TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE
CHURCH BACK IN MY CHILDHOOD

There were some things pertaining to the teaching of the church in my childhood and youth highly commendable. They taught, and that truly, that one might and would know of a truth when he was pardoned and saved from his sins. There was to be no uncertainty at this point. They insisted that a person must seek till he "came through" and could say with joy, "I have got it, I have got it." That's why they called it "getting religion." And it is certain that most of them got something a great many converts of modern times do not have. Say what we may, this one thing remains: There was power in the church in those days which it does not have now.

I am aware that the above statement will be challenged and its correctness denied, nevertheless it is true. In my boyhood days and in my early ministry there was a response to the preaching of the gospel that was hearty and spontaneous. Furthermore, it was contagious and irresistible. It swept over the congregation like fire in dry grass. It is different now. Perhaps I should say that these demonstrations are the exceptions in these times.

I sought until I "came through" or till "I got it" and was sure that I did "get it." The Spirit of God bore witness with my spirit that I was a child of the King and my sins were all forgiven--and I said so with a loud voice. I did not need the preacher or someone else to tell it for me as is the custom now.

In my youthful days every church or class as it was then called had a leader. It was the duty of the class leader to hold class meetings, prayer meetings, and the stated meetings required by the Discipline. My father, from the time I can remember and up to the time of his death, was a class leader. And I can bear witness that he did his work faithfully. The class leader was to see each member of the class at least once quarterly to see how everyone was getting along spiritually.

Class meetings were held regularly once a month, and I am not sure but that they were held weekly. Some times prayer meetings were conducted in the homes of members of the church weekday nights. As I remember this was often the case. It was the custom to hold the class meetings with closed doors. If any were present who were not members of the church, after the prayer service which preceded the examination of the class, they were given the opportunity to withdraw, after which the door was closed. It was the custom in those days for the men and women to sit apart at church. On entering the church the men turned to the left, and the women to the right.

In holding the class meeting the leader would appoint some brother to assist him in examining the class. The leader would take one side of the house and his helper the other, both working at the same time. The leaders would address each member separately after this manner: "Brother or sister so and so, what are your prospects for heaven? How are you getting along spiritually?" and so on. After receiving an answer, the leader would encourage or advise them as their case required.

I attended class meetings regularly after my conversion. When my time came to tell my hopes and fears I always responded. One Sunday in the class meeting I am sure my father called on me to pray, but I did not quite understand whether it was me or someone else, and he did not repeat the call. Had I been sure that he called on me I certainly would have tried. I have never refused to pray when called upon. At the age of twelve years I prayed my first prayer in public. It was at a prayer meeting held at the home of Aunt Katy Brent. Before the meeting began, she asked me if I would help her. She was to lead the services. I told her I would, not knowing exactly what she meant--whether she wanted me to sing or what. As I had never prayed in public, it did not occur to me that I was to lead in prayer until a little later. When I realized I was to pray I got awfully scared. Sure enough Aunt Katy called on me, and I prayed the best I could.

I have always been timid. I shrink from notoriety. I am thankful that that good woman called on me to pray, and I shall always be glad that I bore my cross in my youth. My stepmother spoke the word that sent me to the "mourner's bench" and old Aunt Katy Brent put me to work in the church. I am now in my eighty third year (September 21, 1931) and have been preaching the gospel for sixty one years. I have been a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, seventy five years. Those two good women, my stepmother and Aunt Katy, and the two events referred to--going to the "mourner's bench" and leading in prayer for the first time--loom large in my memory as the two most important epochal periods in my life.

This first public prayer was an event of great moment. Nothing more helpful and strengthening to my spiritual well being could have been laid on me. From that time I was a marked boy in the community. My associates called me preacher, and the older people were sure I was called to preach. But they were no more certain of it than I was, for I never knew the time when I did not feel the call to preach. Even when a very small boy I wanted to preach. I think the impression came to me before I was seven years old.

As a Christian boy I did not have much to encourage me in living a good life. There were but few boys of about my age who were members of the church. As I remember it was mostly the old and the middle aged people who belonged to the church. The old men led the singing and the public prayers. A boy even in his teens who could preside over a convention or a public assembly of any kind would have been considered a prodigy. The old people did everything in the church. Most, if not all, of the preachers who came to our place were old or middle aged men. At least they looked that way to me.

Some of my most vivid memories are of the visits of those preachers in my father's home. They never came and went away without having a song and prayer. Oh, how they could sing and pray! I held them in highest reverence. I looked upon them as God's men. And they were. They seemed to me as men from the unseen world. The people also highly esteemed them. They truly did minister to the souls of men. They preached the whole gospel. There was no doubt or uncertainty in their presentation of the Bible. It was indeed the word of God. They dealt with eternal verities.

Between the age of twelve and sixteen my religious life was not so constant or consistent. I was somewhat backslidden. It was a common thing for persons to backslide or fall from grace after being converted and at the next "big meeting" to make a new start or be reclaimed. This is not strange when we consider that most of the people coming into the church came in under the stress of great emotional feelings. To arouse the emotions to a high state was considered the acme of all successful preaching. Any touching story or incident that would bring their hearers to tears was considered perfectly appropriate and often used with telling effect. Under such stress of feeling, like the stony ground hearers, many joined the church only to go back as soon as their feelings subsided. Hence many had to be converted over. I think I made a second start. At any rate I went to the "mourner's bench" for reclamation.

I do not think my name was ever stricken from the class book from the time I joined the church on probation to this good day, 1931.

Even in my backslidden state I never got so far from God and the church that I did not pray. I often went into some secret place and prayed to my Father in heaven. I never ceased to be religious. Had I had the proper training I would not have concluded that it was needful for me to go to the altar for reclamation. However, it was the common practice in those days and I am glad I did keep on trying. I am grateful too that the church and my friends did not leave me to a godless and wicked world; that they held on to me. I am debtor to the good of all ages and especially the good men and women who led me in safe paths and kept my feet from wandering in my youthful days.

As it was then so it is now. Only a few stand in the breach. I suppose it has always been so. At least this had been my observation.

CHAPTER VII

MY FATHER'S DYING TESTIMONY AND ELSE

My father died when I was fifteen years old. He had a few years before met with an accident in which his thigh was broken, making him a cripple the remainder of his life. But the malady that caused his death was bladder trouble--the doctors called it gravel in those days. An operation might have saved his life. They did not use the knife then as they do now. If father could have had the advantage of skilled surgery that saves so many lives in this "New Day" he need not have died with the ailment he did. His sufferings were intense and having a strong constitution his sufferings were prolonged ere his spirit left the body. He left a good testimony as to his future. While we were standing by his dying bed weeping he feebly asked if we thought he was going to be lost; then raising his hand and pointing heavenward he expired. I shall never forget this dying scene. It will not be long until I too must lay my body down to moulder in the dust. It is a glorious hope and a sweet anticipation that I soon shall be with him again, after a long separation, where parting is no more.

After my father died I remained with my stepmother a year, working on the farm with my oldest single brother. One of my brothers and one of my stepbrothers were working away from home. When father was taken from us I am sure we all should have remained with mother (that is what we always called our stepmother) on the farm. I know father had no thought of us doing otherwise. My stepmother's two boys, Chris and John, went away from home, John to his grandmother's where he had been staying for some time and Chris went to work for his uncle. Myself and brother, my little sister Maiissa, two half sisters and a half brother were all that were left at the old home.

I know that whatever the other members of the family did, I should have remained with my stepmother until I was of age and helped her take care of my sister, my half sisters and brother. But I did not--something I have always regretted. I am sure this was my father's desire. In fact I am sure he never thought is would be otherwise.

Being young I did not know what was best. My older brothers should have seen what ought to have been done. It is my opinion that they rather disliked my stepmother and did not care about all our own mother's children staying with her. I do know there was some trouble on the settlement of my father's estate. Be that as it may, I should have stayed with her. My little sister stayed a year or more and then left.

My oldest brother was married and offered to take me in his home as one of the family, send me to school three months each year, and when I became of age, give me a horse, bridle, and saddle. I stayed with him

about four years. Of course I forfeited my horse for I had not yet reached the age of twenty one. I had not been away long when he met with a serious accident which confined him to his bed several months. Having no one to see after his business I returned and worked for him another year. I still lacked one more year of being twenty one, but my brother gave me a fine animal, saddle, and bridle according to contract.

After leaving my brother's home I went to school for some months and made my home with my stepmother more than with anyone else. I helped some on the farm. I attended all the "big meetings." In those meetings I did altar work, led in prayer, and once in a while I would be called on to exhort. This was a practice followed by the old preachers. They would preach and then often call on some local preacher or exhorter to follow with an exhortation.

At the age of eighteen I was licensed to exhort, and about the same time appointed Sunday school superintendent of the Rock Springs Sunday school. I held that position through one summer as that was as long as a Sunday school was run. There were no evergreen Sunday schools in those days in our community.

The church (or class as it was then called) that I first joined was Lebanon. The building was constructed of hewed logs some of which faced fifteen inches or more. At least they looked that way to me as I sat day after day at school on a bench made out of split saplings that did not face more than seven or eight inches. There was a wide difference in the width of the big logs in the wall of the house and those that I sat on throughout many long summer days. This house was used for both school and church. It was the meeting house where I first joined the church when a little boy. There was no other church house nearer than Caledonia--a little village--and Potosi. There was a Methodist church at this last named place where in the early days of Methodism an annual conference was held presided over by Bishop Soule.

Old Lebanon! How it stirs and thrills my soul as I recall the happy days and the sweet associations of my innocent childhood in and around this place so sacred to my memory! I would, if I could, call them back and live them over again. Of all my days none are so full of precious memories; none so full of joy and gladness. They were care-free days, days in which the sense of responsibility was absent. It was just sweet life without care or irksome toil.

After ten years of age--perhaps a little earlier--the future of my life began to take shape in my thinking. I must take my place in the world of which I was a part. I had decided what my work would be before this time, but it had only been in anticipation--some distance in the future. I must adjust myself to the conditions growing out of it. I must begin to get ready for my work. I swung out into a bigger world. I was not sensible of what was involved in the call to the ministry, nor of my fitness for the work. I would reach the goal and grasp the prize without striving for it, that is, without training. I started wrong, and my whole career as an itinerant minister has been one of hardships, privations, and, for the most part, a failure.

My youthful environments were such, from the standpoint of education and culture, as not to inspire in anyone an ambition to get an education or make any effort to rise above the ordinary. In fact the tendency of the times was to discourage any effort in the attainment of an education as a qualification for the ministry or any profession in life. Even in this day there are multitudes that contend that education spoils the preacher. They maintain that if God calls one to preach the gospel he will also qualify him for that work. This is the veriest nonsense or worse. My father was an uneducated man. He could read and write, but further than that he was very limited. Our neighbors were illiterate, and my brothers and sisters were not educated.

There was no such thing as a public school. The schools we had were called subscription schools. Each patron of the school subscribed a certain sum per scholar, and this had to be paid whether the scholar attended school or not. Some would not subscribe but paid for the number of days their children attended. Ordinarily nothing was taught but reading, writing, and arithmetic. Occasionally there would be a geography or grammar class.

Often the teacher did not know as much as some of the scholars. Under such conditions I was born and reared. I learned to read and spell while quite young. I never studied grammar till I was sixteen years old and then only for a short time. It is not strange, therefore, that at the age of twenty I was an ignorant and uncouth youth.

CHAPTER VIII

CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY
DEDICATION OF CHURCH AT IRONDALE BY BISHOP MARVIN
IN COLLEGE, LEAVING COLLEGE, AND ELSE

At the time of which I am writing the country was undeveloped. Farming was the chief industry. The soil was virgin and very productive. Corn was the principal product. Flax and cotton were raised out of which our clothes were made. Most every farmer had a flock of sheep. The wool was woven into jeans and linsey. Flax was made into linen goods. Supplies were hauled from Ste. Genevieve, a point on the Mississippi River, by way of Iron Mountain over the Old Plank Road.

The working season on the farm was only about three months. When crops were laid by, hunting, and mining was the order of the day. Lots of deer and turkey and game of every kind abounded. Hogs went wild in the woods. Often in winter when snow was on the ground neighbors would band together and go into the woods and kill their wild hogs. Wolves were plentiful on the mountains and in the hills. Sheep had to be penned every night on account of the wolves. Sociability and friendliness were in evidence on all sides.

THE COMING OF THE RAILROAD

Sometime in 1854-57 the Iron Mountain Railroad was built. About this time John Scott and Company built a Cast Iron Blast Furnace at a point twenty miles north of the towns of Arcadia and Ironton which was named Irondale. At this time the terminus of the Iron Mountain Railroad was Ironton. The day the lots were sold (in Irondale) closed with a big fight in which ten or twelve men were engaged. My would-be brother-in-law was left unconscious on the ground but soon revived. Irondale is now quite a flourishing village seventy miles south of St. Louis.

The building of this furnace by Scott and Company gave plenty of work, things livened up and a great change took place. A more educated people came into the community, consequently better schools and more refinement and culture. The old log school and church house was abandoned and ceased to be a community center. The church or class was reorganized at Concord, a Baptist church, which had been recently built. I am sure there was a period of time extending over several years that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had no organization nor place of worship after breaking up at old Lebanon until it was reorganized at Concord. However, the class did not operate long at this place--how long I do not know. E. H. White, then a Southern Methodist preacher, gathered the scattered flock together at this place, and I was one of the number.

In the meantime Irondale had become quite a flourishing village, and the Methodists built a very substantial brick church house. A church was organized out of the scattered members of the former churches that had existed in the communities but were disbanded on account of having no place to worship. As far as I know I am the only living member of the Old Lebanon class.

Before I was born there was a Methodist church at Old Rock Springs, northeast of where Irondale now stands. Few now living in this community know anything about there ever being a church at these springs. The spring is the only mark of the site of this long-ago place of worship of those long-ago Methodists. All I know is what I heard my father and the older people say about it in my early life. Those who belonged to this class have met on the other side of the river. Soon shall I be with them and they will tell me much that I do not know of these early Methodists.

Some years after the passing of old Lebanon a Methodist church was organized in an old boarding house on the divide between where the new Rock Spring Church stands and the Hazel Glen Church. From this old boarding house the class was moved to Rock Springs on Walden Creek about three miles south and west of Hopewell where a church house was built sometime in the sixties. Of all the members that composed this class, I am the only one left except Mrs. Nancy Wisdom of DeSoto and Mrs. Laura Cain.

Just after the Civil War an effort was made to rally the few scattered members of the Southern Methodist Church. Rev. E. H. White, then a local preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was the principal pastor. The rallying place where they were organized was a Baptist church known as Concord, situated three miles south of Irondale. At this time Irondale did not exist, but when the town was built the Methodists built a church, and the Concord class, at least part of the membership, was absorbed in the new organization at that place.

THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH AT IRONDALE

When the church building was completed, Bishop Marvin, during a District Conference, dedicated it. This District Conference was a great event in the Irondale community. Bishop Marvin was a great preacher and a mighty prince in Israel. He preached twice a day for eight or ten days. I was constant in attendance. I never missed, as I remember, a single service. It was a great feast of good things and a joyous time for me.

Quite a number of the old preachers were in attendance--Berryman, Headly, Williams, Marcus, Gibson, and others. One morning at the eleven o'clock service, an experience or testimony meeting was held just before preaching. I do not know how I ever summed up enough courage to stand up before the Bishop and all those old preachers. Though greatly embarrassed, my voice tremulous with fear, I made the attempt. I do not remember but little I said. I do remember one statement I made. I said I had enlisted for the war.

The effect of my testimony must have been touching for in an instant the preachers were up going around shaking hands with each other. And there was weeping and rejoicing all over the church. It was a sight to see these old staid heroes moved to act in this way. I had often in my boyhood days seen my father, "Uncle John," "Uncle Davy," and "Aunt Katy" Brent with my stepmother and whole congregations under great emotional feelings shaking hands in big meetings but had never seen a great bishop and a lot of great preachers under such high emotional excitement.

I have always and everywhere let people with whom I touched elbows know that I was a follower of Jesus Christ. I have never been ashamed of Him. I have always confessed Him before the world.

Before the meeting closed it was talked around that the church was going to send me to school, and as I was not able to pay my way, they would do it for me. At this time the Methodists owned the college at Arcadia, Missouri. The school had been the private property of Rev. Jerome C. Berryman who either sold or gave it to the church.

L. M. Lewis was the president of the school. Talk ripened into action, and I was to go to school at Arcadia. I must do what I could in the matter of expenses. I was to sell my mare and pay what I could down and stay in school until I graduated. My books were not to cost me anything. In fact, as I understood it, the church was to educate me for a minister. I had one hundred and twenty five dollars which I received for my mare. I think, as nearly as I can remember, I paid seventy five dollars and entered the school. I was assigned to the attic, third floor, a very good and comfortable room.

My roommates were Mark Alsup, Sikeston, Missouri; two Shumaker boys from St. Louis County; and a boy from Scott County, Missouri, by the name of Hunter; also another boy whose name I have forgotten. Alsup and the Shumaker boys were full of frolic and fun; the other boys very still and quiet. It seemed that I was expected to stand sponsor for the conduct of the whole gang as the President called on me to give account of all that went wrong in our room. I suppose it was because I was going to be a preacher and belonged to the church. I ought to keep things straight in my room. The other boys were anything but preachers.

It was not long after I entered school till the President announced one morning at the chapel hour that if any student who was willing and wanted to work his way through school could do so by sweeping the school rooms and making fires. This would only pay his tuition. Nothing was said about board. As I was the only student dependent on the charity of the school, so far as I know, I concluded that he meant me. It was a fair offer, and, being somewhat of an independent nature, I was willing to take the job. I did the work until I left the school at or near the end of the first quarter.

The Rev. Jerome C. Berryman was pastor of the Arcadia church. He often came into the room where I was sweeping but hardly ever spoke to me or gave me any advice or encouragement. My opinion of him, as it is

now, was that he was an autocrat. I am sure that his manner and presence were more repelling than fascinating. He seemed so stern and unapproachable. He may have been a good pastor, but he was not a great preacher.

My roommates and I often talked to each other about the things we did when we were younger. Little did I think that the subjects we talked about would loom up in the future of my life to my hurt. But it did. There was another roommate, whose name I forgot to give in the list already mentioned, by the name of Jones--Charley Jones. He was a brother of one of the professors in the school. This boy became the medium of the transmission of some of the things I had told the boys of my younger days. While through ignorance I might have been guilty of infractions from good conduct I was at this time innocent of any conduct contrary to right living. I was striving with the help of the Lord to live a pure, clean life and was not guilty of any vile practices. It was not until I applied for admission in the St. Louis conference some time after I left school that I heard of the slander or tale that started while I was at school. It had followed me to the conference and was the cause of my rejection for admission on trial.

I continued in school working as janitor till sometime in December or just before the close of the first term. It was awfully hard for me to study because of my embarrassment occasioned by my lack of clothes and other necessary things. I could see no way for me to continue in school, so I concluded to quit and go to work. No one offered me any assistance except that my brother-in-law sent me a pair of brogan shoes. He had a large family of his brothers and sisters and a widowed mother to care for and was withal a poor man. My folks were all helpless to help me. The authorities of the school never once offered any assistance. Even the preacher who took such a great interest in me at first became signally silent. What was a boy to do? I quit.

CHAPTER IX

LEAVING COLLEGE THE COLLEGE SOLD TO THE CATHOLICS STARTED ON A TWO HUNDRED MILE TRIP EXPERIENCES ON THE ROAD POPLAR BLUFF

When I had determined to leave school I went to the President and told him what I was going to do. And this is all the answer he gave me: "It shows a bad principle." What he meant I do not know. The finances of the institution were in a bad shape, and things looked discouraging. They were putting up a new building and straightened for money. Finally the church lost the school, and it passed into the hands of the Catholic church. The losing of the school was a great blow to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in this section from which it has never recovered.

Having a nephew living near Annapolis, Missouri, twenty miles south of Arcadia, I went to his home, making the trip in one day on foot. The terminus of the Iron Mountain railroad at this time was Pilot Knob or Ironton, but the road was being built to Annapolis and further south. I worked at the tie job, barking ties for my nephew. I think fifty cents a day and my board was all I was to receive. I worked for him for about six months.

When I left Arcadia it was my intention to go to Dunklin County in the southeast part of the state where Brother Trimble, a local preacher, was living and travel with him on the circuit, as he was doing work as supply, or teach school if I could get one. From the time I left school my every thought and desire was to get license to preach and join the conference. This was my goal. I had no thought of the usual preparation. I could learn to preach after I got to be a preacher. In the after years I learned how sadly I was mistaken.

My nephew not being able to pay me for my work in the tie job, I started on my way to Dunklin County afoot intending to tramp it through. It was a foolish thing to undertake as it was a trip of not less than two hundred miles, and I had only five cents. I left my trunk, in which were a few books, at my nephew's, and putting what few clothes I had in an old-fashioned satchel, I started on that ever-to-be-remembered journey. As I look across the years I wonder what caused me to act with such utter recklessness. Without money and going among strangers with no thought of sickness or any mishap of any kind whatsoever, I just launched forth into the unknown future.

My first day on the road about noon, at the crossing of a creek called Crain Pond, in Wayne County, I fell in with a Baptist preacher who was traveling my way. Toward night we stopped at a farm house and

asked for lodging for the night. As he was a preacher and I was going to be one, we concluded we might get by on that ground. We had previously talked the matter over. I do not know whether my fellow traveler was as lean of purse as I was or not. At any rate I told him I had no money. The farmer, a nice, man, let us stay with him. The next morning I gave my host my razor. We traveled together nearly all that day. By and by, my comrade came to where he had to leave me.

I put up that night with a farmer by the name of Wilson. They were very kind to me and kept me free of charge. I stayed with him the following day and night. There was a chance for me to get a subscription school in that community. After a hurried canvass I failed to get enough scholars to justify the undertaking. My friend who had so kindly kept me without compensation had to take a sick man some distance along the way that I was going and kindly let me ride in the ambulance. It was an old U. S. Army ambulance. On going down a sideling hill the thing turned over, and we had to scramble and scratch to get out as it was curtained on either side and at the end. By and by, I had to leave them as our ways parted.

I was very lonesome. About the middle of the afternoon I came up with some movers who had camped. I had an extra coat in my satchel which I tried to sell to the man who seemed to be the boss. Failing in this I moved on at a great rate of speed. I got scared. The man was a mean-looking fellow, and I thought he might follow me and rob me. I took fright all of a sudden and traveled on with rapid stride, looking back every few minutes to see if he was following me. After going a few miles I concluded that if he had started after me he had given up the chase.

About sunset I came to a farm house on Black River about a mile from Poplar Bluff, then a struggling village of not more than two hundred inhabitants. This man's name was Chambers. I had to plead with him quite a while before he would let me stay over night with him and then only on condition that I leave my shawl and satchel in pawn for my night's lodging. He charged me seventy-five cents. He took my shawl and satchel and put them in a safe place so that his bill might be sure.

The morning came and with it rain. I persuaded him to let me have my shawl as what I had in my satchel would more than pay the bill. I went on in to Poplar Bluff an entire stranger with my nickle perfectly intact. The first place I entered was a little log shack of a building known as Land and O'Neal's store. Here I spent my nickle for tobacco. I was at that time a user of the weed. Mr. Lane was a Methodist and a leading member of the church in that place. Mr. O'Neal was also a member of that church. It is a little strange, to say the least of it, that I just hit their place. But I do not think that it just happened; that I, a lone boy not knowing a single person in the town, just happened to come in contact with these good men.

I introduced myself to Mr. Lane and told him who I was and what I was. I also told him where I stayed the night before and about my clothes and books I had pawned for the night's lodging at Mr. Chambers up the river, and without a word or the least hesitancy he gave me the money to

redeem my trinkets. Furthermore he gave me work and my board for several days until I got a job in Mr. Kitchen's Livery Stable.

CHAPTER X

MEETING REV. J. A. RUSSELL
HIS CHARACTERISTICS
AN INCIDENT--GRUBBING
LICENSED TO PREACH AT OLD SHILOH
CAMPMEETINGS--OLD TIME POWER

At Poplar Bluff I met the Rev. J. A. Russell, preacher in charge of the Doniphan circuit, Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Brother Russell, though not a great preacher, was a good man and great in exhortation and prayer. At times he was wonderfully eloquent and would stir his audience to a high state of emotional excitement. He was very successful in winning souls. He was very variable in temperament. At times he suffered from great spiritual depression. In such moods he would conclude that he had no religion at all. Oft times in our travels to his appointments he would stop by the wayside and have me pray for him. Then again he would be on the mountain top of religious ecstasy. Often I would have to pray for him before he would attempt to preach.

His people loved him but did not support him even with the common comforts of life. Often his family was reduced to the scantiest fare. He had a good woman for a wife and two bright little boys. As I look back to that time I am made to wonder at his courage and grit in staying on the job under such circumstances. I think I am safe in saying that nine out of ten of the conference preachers of the present day would have quit.

It is strange language to me when I hear my good brethren of this good year 1924 say that they cannot live on a salary of fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars when such men as Russell and others were compelled to live on two or three hundred--sometimes less--each year. The conclusion is inevitable that the heroic and self-sacrificing spirit is not present in the present day preachers as it was in those heroic men of whom I write. However, there was a romance about the life of an itinerant preacher in those days that does not belong to it now.

They were not bound by the conventionalities that exist at the present time in our so-called up-to-date society. Organizations, societies, clubs, drives, collections, civic interests, conventions, social functions, and the rest did not consume their time and burn up their life's batteries as they do now. There was a freedom of action unfettered by any sentiment of public opinion and unrestrained by fear of persecution. They were pioneers blazing the way for the coming of the wonderful future which is ours today. We are the gatherers of the harvest of their sowing. Their posterity owes them a debt that never will be paid. I rejoice that I too had a small part in the work of helping to bring in a better day for the ministry of my great church.

I have digressed a little regarding what I have said of Brother Russell in the story of my entrance into Poplar Bluff. I worked for Mr. Kitchen in his livery stable, feeding and watering the horses, sawing wood and keeping things in order. His house was the tavern of the town. During court week he kept the judge and the attorneys who visited the town when court was in session. As all traveled horseback or in carriages I had quite a lot of horses to feed and water. I had plenty to do during court week.

When business began to be dull Mr. Kitchen put me to cutting cord wood. The timber was mostly sweet gum and water oak, and very hard to work into cord wood. The work was too hard for me. I could not stand it account of heart trouble. Mr. Kitchen having no other work, I hired to Professor Rice to grub, as I remember, about three acres of town lots. Mr. Rice was a Baptist preacher and also a school teacher. During the fall and winter he taught the town school and in the spring and early summer, a select school.

The ground that I grubbed, if my memory is correct, is the ground on which the Southern Methodist Church now stands. Little did I think that, when I worked several nights by moonlight because of the hot days, I was grubbing ground upon which a Southern Methodist Church would be built and in which an annual conference would be held and I as a member of that conference would attend and give my testimony to the saving grace of my Lord and Master after the lapse of forty or more years. Nor did I ever think that my kind friend who took me in when I was a stranger would suffer such a declension in piety and become a drunkard and a vagabond. While attending an annual conference some years later one night I met him on the street drunk. He began business in a small way with a small capital and climbed up until he became wealthy and prominent in business circles. He was also a leader in the church, but alas! "How are the mighty fallen!" Through strong drink and the deceitfulness of riches he went down.

I do not know whether he ever reformed, but I do know that in his kindness to me he made a friend who will ever cherish his memory, and of all the friends who helped and stood by me I know of none who rendered me a greater service in time of need or that stands out more luminous with the luster of friendship. "In as much as ye did it unto the least of these ye did it unto me." Somehow I feel that I shall someday meet my old time and true friend in my Father's house restored and made clean by the blood of the Lamb.

THE CHURCH AT POPLAR BLUFF

At that time the Southern Methodist Church had a small organization which met monthly in the court house. We had prayer meeting weekly and a small Sunday School. Brother Lane was steward, class leader, and Sunday School superintendent. I put my letter in the church thus identifying myself with them. If one wanted license to preach, he must be recommended to the quarterly conference by the class of which he was a member. One

Sunday morning after preaching Brother Russell, the pastor, asked the church to recommend me to the quarterly conference for license to preach. The case being put before the church for its action, there was complete silence. Not one voted. After waiting a few minutes Brother Russell dismissed the congregation. This was my first failure. Being subject to the blues, I was cast down, but not forsaken. Brother Russell carried my case to the Old Shiloh Church situated on Cane Creek in the west part of Butler County twenty miles from Poplar Bluff.

My failure to get a recommendation to the quarterly conference was not caused by lack of confidence in me as a Christian nor anything touching my moral character, but because it was a new business for the congregation and partly because the pastor failed to instruct them as to how to proceed in a matter of this kind. A restatement of the case would have resulted in a unanimous vote in my favor. I went with Brother Russell to one of his appointments at Shiloh and put my letter in that church and was without the least objection recommended to the quarterly conference for license to preach. I had previously to this time made several trips during the summer to this place and had become acquainted with the people of the community. I always made the trip afoot from Poplar Bluff, a distance of twenty miles.

I finally left Poplar Bluff in the summer of eighteen hundred and seventy. From this time on I was with Brother Russell, going with him to his appointment. Sometimes I would exhort after he preached. Again I would try to preach and he would exhort. My dear reader, you may be sure it was a team. We had some very successful revivals and a goodly number joined the church.

There were two camp meeting grounds on the circuit at which camp meetings were held annually. These were great events in the communities where they were held, especially the Old Shiloh camp meeting. They were times of great religious fervor and rejoicing. The people left their farms and with self abandon threw themselves into the meeting for ten or more days, feeding the multitudes with the best of the land. They dispensed a hospitality which in comparison with modern hospitality would result in the latter shriveling into nothingness.

Sometimes persons would be so wrought upon that their bodies would become rigid--so much so as to become unbending. One young girl was so affected that, while lying on her back in a trance, she would raise her body while only her heels rested on the floor of the shed where the meeting was being held. She would become apparently unconscious every night and had to be carried to her father's cabin after the services. I saw hard-hearted and wicked men, while looking at her as she lay on the floor of the shed, break into weeping and fall down and begin to pray and were converted.

We do not see any such demonstrations in this so-called "new day." There is none of the old time power of fifty years ago.

CHAPTER XI

LICENSED TO PREACH--DATE, PLACE MY FIRST SERMON CONFERENCE TWO NOTED BISHOPS JOINING CONFERENCE

I was licensed to preach at a quarterly conference of the Doniphan circuit held in the town of Doniphan, Missouri, county seat of Ripley County; J. C. Williams, presiding elder and J. A. Russell, preacher in charge. The presiding elder not being present, J. A. Russell presided. He only asked me one or two questions. In answering his questions I cried, and Old Uncle Isaac Copeland, a local preacher, got happy and they all cried and I was told to retire and had hardly closed the door till they call me back and announced that they had made me a preacher. The next day (Sunday) I was called upon to preach and did the best I could. I am sure no one told me, "That was the best sermon I ever heard." To me, though, it was a great event. I had reached the goal that I had been striving for with ceaseless effort ever since my childhood days.

The next great thing that I desired to do was to join the St. Louis conference and be appointed to a circuit. At the end of the conference year I went with Brother Russell and family to the home of his father who lived near Leesburg, Crawford County, Missouri. Sister Russell was a noble woman. She was so patient, kind, and gentle. I do not remember of ever hearing a cross word or an unkind word fall from her lips. Only eternity will or can reveal what suffering and hardships were her lot in those years of her fidelity and loyalty to her husband and to her Lord and Master.

As I think of those days I am persuaded that I did not do as I might or should have done. I should not have permitted them with their scanty income to be burdened by my staying with them in their home. Being a green and gawky boy I did not think just what it meant to them. But they were so kind to me and so considerate of my welfare. Then I needed them so much. It would have been hard for me to break away from them. If ever there was any feeling or intimation on their part that I was not welcome I never saw the least trace of it. I am sure there was none. They have long since gone beyond. Their crowns are brighter than mine will ever be. I shall soon be with them.

After staying with his father a few days Brother Russell and I started to conference which was to meet in the city of St. Louis at Centenary Church, Sixteen and Pine. I had no money and Brother Russell paid my car fare to the conference. I had never been in the city so I had to have someone to go with me and take care of me. I know nothing of the ways of society and was awkward and bashful to the limit. The city was big,

the church was big, the preachers were big, and everything I saw was of wonderful dimensions. My clothes were worn and dingy, my pants (some light cotton stuff) were short by six inches, and my shoes were brogans and coarse at that.

Surely the prospect was not a very inviting one. Brother Russell and I were entertained at the home of a Mr. Rule. We were nicely and comfortably cared for. God wonderfully took care of me. I was ignorant of so many things. I knew nothing of the ways they lit up their dwellings. I do not know that I had ever heard of gas, especially as a means of lighting up dwelling houses. Reader, you may wonder at the verdure of a boy who had lived in a community where one scarcely ever came in contact with men and women of education and refinement, but you must remember that all the wonderful inventions from the sewing machine to the radio have come to pass in my life of eighty two years (1931.)

At the time of which I am writing St. Louis had just common oil lamps set on posts along the side walks to light up their streets. The street cars were drawn by mules. I am of the opinion that but few of the dwellings were lighted with gas. One night Russell was called away, and I was left alone. On going to bed I blew out the light instead of turning it out. I slept soundly all night and arose for breakfast all right. If the jet was open, the room not being large, it was not possible for me to escape asphyxiation unless by a miracle. Mr. Rule may have cut the gas off at some point in the house or he may have come into my room after I had gone to sleep and turned off the gas. I never knew how it was.

THE CONFERENCE

The conference at this time covered a large territory. We had two conferences in the state, the Missouri and the St. Louis. At this session the St. Louis conference was divided and the Southwest Missouri Conference created or formed.

I had never seen so many preachers together. It was a great sight and for me the most wonderful time of my life. How they did talk! There was a great debate about some college--I do not know what college, but think it was Central College, Fayette, Missouri. I recall a few names of those great men: Boyle, Morris, Marvin, Lewis, Protsman, Berryman, Peace, Finney, Browning, Smith, Godby, ex-Governor Polk, a layman, and a host of others whose names I do not recall.

GOING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

The committee to examine the candidates for admission on trial was J. E. Godby and J. C. Berryman. The examination was oral--not written as is the custom now. There were but two before the committee, myself and a local preacher by the name of Boggs. The committee did not ask me but a few questions on the Bible. I failed to answer one very simple question. I knew the answer but was so embarrassed I could not think.

Brother Boggs, as I now remember, also failed to answer several questions. But the committee reported that it was "well impressed with both his head and heart" but not so favorably impressed with me, as I learned afterward. Brother Boggs was accepted, and I was rejected--my second failure.

In the debate over my case it was intimated that there might be some things in the background not brought to light. I have previously mentioned a slanderous report that was started on me after I left school and which had followed me and bobbed up when my case was brought before the conference. When my case came up for discussion I retired from the auditorium into a side room and fell on my knees in prayer. Brother Russell who had stood by me so long did not fail me in this trying hour. He rose to the occasion and with his accustomed firey eloquence turned the tide in my favor. Bishop Marvin, who was in the chair though not the Bishop holding the conference, having heard my testimony in the love feast at the dedication of the church at Irondale, made a talk in my favor which resulted in a move being made to reconsider my case, and I was admitted on trial.

The date of this conference was October 11, 1871, Bishop Doggett being the presiding Bishop, assisted by Bishop Marvin. But for Brother Russell and Bishop Marvin I would not have been received into the conference. The opposition came from two men. I think I may be mistaken in this as I was not in the conference room when my case was up for consideration. Brother Berryman was the pastor and L. M. Lewis, the President of the school at Arcadia. But for these two men I think there would have been little or no objection to my reception into the conference on trial.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

After the adjournment of the conference I went with Brother Russell back to his father's in Crawford County. Brother Russell was sent to the Bellview circuit, and I was sent to the Van Buren mission. I had no horse and no money to buy one and was at least three days' journey from my mission. I gave my note for fifty dollars with Brother Russell as security due one year from date and bought me a Mexican pony. Thus equipped, I started to the circuit, going with Brother Russell and his family as far as the head of Big River in Iron County, Missouri. Here we parted, he going on to Bellview, and I stopped with my aunt, Mrs. Polly McMurtry, for the night.

The next morning I started down Black River on my way to some point on my circuit of which I know nothing, Barnesville (now Ellington) in Reynolds County being my objective. It was the Sabbath day. My pony must have been a poor traveler for at sundown I could not have been more than twenty miles from where I started that morning. I had my little belongings in my old satchel strapped to my saddle--the same old satchel and the same old shawl I had while tramping to Poplar Bluff the previous spring.

I stopped at noon and made my dinner on black walnuts. After resting I led my pony up to a stump so I could mount easily and as he did not move quickly I gave him a tap with my switch behind the saddle. This stirred him up good and proper, so much so that he began to kick and never let up until he had kicked off the saddle and all else. Gathering up the fragments that nothing be lost I started on my journey. Near sunset I came to a farm house where a Mr. Joshua Carter lived who consented to keep me all night. I just had seventy five cents. When I asked him my bill, he said seventy five cents. I had nothing left and was one day or more from my destination. I traveled all that day arriving at Barnesville about sunset, having traveled about twenty four miles. I stayed with a Mr. Barnes all night. He was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North. He was very kind to me and didn't charge me for my night's lodging.

Barnesville consisted of a farm house, two dwellings, a blacksmith shop, and a gristmill. It is now a flourishing village with a population of five or six hundred and the center of quite a large lumber interest. It has railroad connection with the Missouri Pacific at Leeper, Missouri. From Barnesville I crossed over on Doe Run Valley where Rev. Isaac Copeland, who had been on the mission (Van Buren) the year before, lived. He lived in a pole shanty undaubed and unfit for a human dwelling. His children had all grown up and gone out from the home, and just he and his wife composed the family. They were good people and loyal to their church and to their Lord. They had but little of this world's goods, yet they were seemingly very well contented. I stayed with them one or two days, and, after getting from Brother Copeland a plan of the circuit, then started on my first round on the work. My circuit had twenty two preaching places on it and embraced parts of four counties--Carter, Reynolds, Shannon, and Dent. From Van Buren it extended to within twenty miles of Salem in Dent County, distance of one hundred miles; thence east to the head of Logan Creek in Reynolds County; thence south to Van Buren.

I preached most every day or at least twenty two times each month. Multiply twenty two by twelve and the product is two hundred and sixty four, the number of times that I preached during the year. This, however, does not include the preaching at my protracted meetings which I held at each point. These meetings usually run for eight or ten days. The distance traveled could not have been less than two hundred miles each month.

My circuit extended from Van Buren up Pike Creek to its source, then across to Eminence, then up Jack's fork of Current River to Barksdale Mill, thence north to the mouth of Spring Valley on Current River, then to Chrisco's Mill on Sinking Creek, then east to the head of Big Sinking, then over on Little Sinking, then across to the head of Logan Creek by the way of Big Creek, then down Logan Creek to the Sloan school house, then across to Hen Peck (Pine Valley) and from thence to Van Buren, the place of starting. For my hire I received sixty four dollars and sixty cents--mostly in yarn socks and jeans breeches.

I had to cross the creeks and the rivers a great many times. Often my feet got wet and in the winter weather I suffered a lot with cold feet. My pants and socks would get wet and freeze stiff. Had no such things as

overshoes or overcoat--just an old shawl much worn. There were stretches of country ten or twelve miles without a human habitation. One winter morning I got so cold that I wanted to get off my horse, lie down, and go to sleep. Had I done so, it would have been my last sleep.

Imagine a gangling boy on a Mexican pony, an old, worn shawl thrown over his shoulders, his socks trying to hide down in a pair of brogan shoes, going down one of those long valleys on a cold winter morning, and you have a picture of the Van Buren circuit rider!

CHAPTER XII

At the close of the conference year I went up to conference as gay as a lark soaring in the sky. The conference was at Arcadia. The Grecian bend was the craze in female attire. The city preachers had their wives with them dressed in the latest style. There was a hump on their back that reminded one of the hump on the back of a camel over which their dresses hung in a long trail behind, held up with the hand in the most graceful manner they knew. As they walked, their bodies inclined forward as if they were looking for something lost. It is astonishing to what extremes lust and foolish pride will lead its votaries.

MY SECOND YEAR

At the close of the conference I was sent back to Van Buren. I worked and suffered about as I did the year before and received sixty dollars in cash. I do not remember how much in the way of socks and jeans breeches. Think I had quite a supply left over from the year before.

The Rev. Marcus Arrington was my presiding elder this year and also the year previous. He was a good man. I took a lot of people into the church this year as I also did the year before--how many I do not know. I married a good many couples.

I kept a journal for five or six years but got discouraged and gave it up. I never lost my congregations. People came for miles around to hear "the boy preacher" as they called me. I did my work faithfully and God blessed the labor of my hands. I hardly ever missed an appointment. At times I was on the road at midnight. I studied hard and read a great deal horseback. I sat up late in the night to read and write. I believed the people loved me, but they were poor and ignorant. It should not be forgotten that this was away back in the seventies when preachers were suffered to preach the gospel of a "free salvation;" a time when the gospel of Christ crucified had not been commercialized as in this day of big salaries.

The people of my circuit had no way of making money except to dig it out of the earth farming. Those best able to contribute to the support of the ministry were outside of the church. To help this class of people, the preacher should be settled among them and the conference should furnish the means to establish schools and other helps.

At the beginning of my second year on the Van Buren mission I married. Perhaps under the circumstances this is the last thing I should have done. But I had no thought of the morrow, nor of future needs. While I had no one but myself to see after, it did not matter just so I had clothes, something to eat, and a place to sleep. I was

content. This no concern for the next day, however, has been characteristic of my whole life. I have been, so it seems to me, a sort of drifting derelict. As long as I was able to work, I found something to do and did it. Have always found friends who took care of me in sickness. In my worst days of poverty I was never refused credit except by one man and now that man would like to have my patronage.

My wife went with me to my appointments. I had a horse and my father-in-law let us have one of his. Thus equipped we made the rounds of the circuit. We made headquarters with my father-in-law. He was a good man and a kind father. I owe him a debt of gratitude I shall never be able to pay.

As the mission did not pay much I had to do something else to supplement our living. The old adage, "Where there is a will there is a way," is true. So in the fall and early winter I taught school four months at thirty dollars per month. Had to ride thirty miles for a certificate. The county superintendent of schools asked me a few questions and gave me a grade of eight on all the branches then taught in the public schools. I think I gave entire satisfaction.

I kept up my appointments of the mission. After church one night, my wife and I went home with Brother McCaskill. After retiring to our places of slumber we heard one of the calves bellowing at a terrible rage. Mr. McCaskill jumped out of the bed and went running up the hill and Mrs. McCaskill after him. I started after her and my wife started after me, all in our night clothes. Up the hill we went and out into the bushes where the bawling calf was evidently being killed by a panther or something. The light of a lantern and the noise we were all making scared whatever it was away. The calf was so nearly killed that it died the next day. Many incidents occurred in our travels on this mission charge which I shall not relate as it would make these pages too cumbersome.

The fourteenth of October of my second year on the circuit, our first born came to our home. We named her Effie Ada. The third day after she was born, the mother took a severe chill, and for twenty nine days I never had my clothes off. Her sickness was the deadly puerperal, commonly called the child bed fever. It was eighteen miles to the nearest doctor. Doctor Rock, a great and good man and also a great physician, attended her almost daily. My father-in-law showed himself the kind, good man that he was. The noble doctor who administered to my wife so faithfully never charged me one cent. He has been gone to his long home these many years, and I am persuaded that the Master will say to him "in that day:" "In as much as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto Me."

After the recovery of my wife we moved to another point on my circuit where I had contracted to teach the Sinking Creek School. They were to pay me thirty dollars per month. We stayed with Uncle Moses Light. He and his wife were two as fine people as I ever met. We remained in their home part of the fall and winter, and if they ever thought of any

compensation no one ever knew it. They were every day Christians and devoted to the church. I cannot say enough in praise of them. Words fail me. Had they charged us board, we could not have paid them for at the expiration of the first month of my school I went to Salem to draw my pay and was informed that there was not a dollar in the treasury for that district, and that they were behind with the teacher who had taught before me. I taught another month hoping I would get my pay, but failed. As I remember I sold the vouchers for about half their face value. The superintendent of schools visited the school but said nothing about the financial status of the district.

The examination for a certificate in this county was much more exacting and thorough than that which I had taken in another county the year before. This one lasted one half of a day and was held in the court-house with two or three lawyers present. I received a second grade certificate with a good all around average. Seeing I was to get nothing for my teaching I quit and we went back to my father-in-law's.

I continued to travel my circuit until the end of the conference year meeting my appointments regularly each month, at the same time teaching school in the county in which I had previously taught, for which I received thirty dollars per month. I also taught this same school the following year. I had missed the two last sessions of the annual conference, and this was to my disadvantage as all the preachers were expected to be present. Sickness in both cases was the cause of my absence.

CHAPTER XIII

MY THIRD YEAR

Again for the third year the conference returned me to the Van Buren mission. At that time two years was as long as any preacher could remain on a circuit or station, but the conference just changed the name to Sinking Creek Mission and sent me back. As I was already on the job, we did not have to move. The conference appropriated one hundred dollars mission money for my support, but as the mission paid but little, I had to do something else. So my father-in-law rented me his farm, furnishing everything and giving me part of the crop. I worked hard but a drought set in, and I made nothing. I did not attend my appointments very regularly, and by the end of the year I had lost out almost entirely on the mission. Dr. T. M. Finney of St. Louis was my presiding elder. He came only one time during the year. Sinking Creek mission sank this year as it never appeared in the list of circuits afterward.

Why the conference sends a boy to a place and keeps him there as it did me I cannot tell. It was enough to knock the grit and the ambition out of a seasoned man, say nothing of a raw boy.

CHAPTER XIV

MY FOURTH YEAR

At the conference I was appointed to the Doniphan circuit which paid me, as I remember, two hundred dollars. My failure in my farming venture left me with nothing much to pay moving expenses. Having one horse I decided to rig up a team and move myself. I bought an old mare which was a good puller when she wanted to pull, but would not budge an inch when she took a notion, and my horse was like minded.

With the help of a neighbor I fixed up an old wagon and was ready to start to my new charge. It required about three days to make the trip with a good team. Saturday evening before we were to start Monday morning, my wife and I stayed all night with my brother-in-law. We went out to feed the next morning and found the old mare dead as a stewed mackerel. My plans perished with her, but I have always believed it was providential and not a "just happen so." Had we started with that team we would never have gotten to our destination. This was in keeping with many unwise things I have done without counting the cost.

I hired a man with a good team to move us and what little plunder we had. We were two days and a half on the road. The first night out we stayed with some friends in the bounds of my old circuit. The second day, after passing through the country known as the Irish Wilderness, darkness having overtaken us, we were hard put to find a place to stay for the night. Seeing a light over in a field, my man gave a whoop which was answered by a man who was batching in a small cabin. He said he would keep us if we cared to stay. We were glad to accept his kind hospitality. Having food with us we took out beds out of the wagon and made them on the floor where my wife and I and our two babies rested very comfortably through the night.

The next night we stopped with some people who were members of the church in the circuit to which we were moving. I never think of this night without remorse and pain. Our little girl baby was cross and kept crying. I thought I knew how to raise children, but I did not. I did not have any patience with crying children then and but little since that day. So I tried to make her hush. And she did quit crying but continued to sob for a long time. I shall never forget that night. My heart is sore as I think of it.

Nothing out of the ordinary happened this year. It was the same old grind of hardship and poverty. One of my stewards who had a farm near town gave me my fire wood, but I had to cut it and give him half, he hauling my part. Sometimes I went with a borrowed team along the big road and gathered up the fallen timber for fire wood. So far as I know no one complained. I had good congregations all the year, held a few meetings and took several people into the church.

My circuit had nine or ten preaching places at which I preached monthly. The first month or two I paid five dollars house rent. Then we moved into one room of a house occupied by Rev. Marcus Arington who was my presiding elder the first year I was on the Van Buren mission. He granted this favor without solicitation on my part, and nothing was ever mentioned about paying rent. He and his wife were most excellent people. Only four in the family. Two children named John and Carrie.

CHAPTER XV

MY FIFTH YEAR

I remained on the Doniphan circuit only one year. From there I was sent to the Houston circuit in Texas County, Missouri. It was really a mission with an appropriation of one hundred and fifty dollars. There were nine churches in the circuit, the longest ride being twenty miles. Though a stranger among them I made lots of friends. With the appropriation, donations, and what the circuit paid, I did fine. I even received a lot of presents from people in St. Louis. The circuit paid less than two hundred dollars. I am writing from memory. The conference minutes will show amount paid.

J. E. Godbey was my presiding elder the first year I was on the Houston circuit and H. Hanesworth the other two years. Godbey was the best all around presiding elder I have ever had. If I could have started my ministry under him I might have made something of myself. I think Brother Hanesworth never liked me much, and I lay a lot of my hardships at his door.

The three years I spent on this circuit I count as the most happy years of my ministerial life. Some of the leading men in Houston, though they were not in the church, were among my best friends. Mr. Stephens, Mr. Kay, and others stood by me at all times while in their town. When I was appointed to the Houston circuit there was not a church building in the town nor in the bounds of my charge. I preached in the school houses and in the homes of the people. I set on foot two church building enterprises, one in Houston and the other at Spring Valley, neither of which was finished when I left the circuit.

We had only a dozen members at Houston, eleven women and one man who would get drunk occasionally. Mr. Stephens, one of my best friends though not a member of the church, subscribed a certain sum to the building fund and paid it, but it had entirely slipped my mind. One morning I called at his store and asked for his subscription. Said he, "I paid it," Naming the time and manner of paying it. I said, "No, you never paid it." He contended he had and showed me how he wrapped the money in a piece of paper and gave it to me. I was so sure he had not paid it that I still insisted he was mistaken. Without any more words he handed me the amount of his former subscription, and I stepped out of the store but hardly got half way across the street until I remembered. The whole transaction came to me as plain as if it were taking place at that very moment, but I had contended so vehemently that he had not paid his subscription I did not have the courage to go back and tell him I was wrong. I would tell him tomorrow, but when the morrow came I had less courage, and the shame of it was greater than ever. So the confession was put off until it was too late. Not long afterward my friend died. Fifty years have come and gone, but the memory of my cowardice remains with me to this day.

Sometime ago I wrote his son about it, but he said, "Forget it." I would if I could. It is not so much the crime of the thing that hurts but the shame and moral cowardice of it. Of course, the money went into church. He just doubled his subscription which was five dollars, that is, paid it twice. There was something strange about it. Why did it not all come to me while I was arguing with him? Why out in the street? Was it not some supernatural agency that brought to my mind such a vivid revelation of the whole transaction? It would have been an easy matter for me to walk back in my friend's store and confess that I was wrong. It came to me like a flash. I have sent his son the extra subscription which he paid and thus made restitution so far as I am able to do so.

One other humiliating experience I had while on the Houston circuit. It was my ejection from a store. A man by the name of Stout was sent to Houston to sell at auction the merchandise of a bankrupt merchant in order to settle the claim of a St. Louis firm. I bought an article at a small cost which proved to be worthless. My friends, among whom was the sheriff, told me to take it back, and I reluctantly did so not thinking of any trouble. I said to the salesman, "That article (a piece of China ware) I bought of you last night was broken." He replied, "If you say another word I will put you out of this store." I never saw a man, unless he was drunk or crazy, that I was afraid of and told him I would talk as much as I pleased. He then leaped over the counter, took me by the collar of the coat, and followed me out of the house. I did not resist him but merely walked out. He did not know who I was but when he learned I was the Methodist preacher he left town that night. There was no need for any trouble if he had been a gentleman.

While this fellow was in town he boasted that he was building an air ship. At that time such a thing was considered Utopian. Whether he ever built an air ship I know not. One thing is sure--somebody has. Air ships are common sights nearly everywhere every day.

CHAPTER XVI

FAILING HEALTH

Soon after leaving Doniphan I took sick with the chills and fever, and for ten years scarcely a day passed that I did not have some fever more or less--some days light and again it would be raging. My skin was as yellow as a pumpkin, my spleen hard and caked, and my liver slugged and inactive. I rode many days with a burning fever. From one of my appointments my wife hauled me home after two doctors had given me up to die, but in a few days I was going again.

LICKING CIRCUIT

From Houston I was sent to Licking circuit where I remained two years. This charge had seven or eight preaching places, distant from the parsonage from five to twenty miles. I spent two very pleasant years on this circuit barring ill health.

It was while on this circuit I was hauled home from one of my appointments to die. Preached Saturday morning at eleven o'clock and by bedtime had a raging fever. I was semi-unconscious. Our family physician was called, and after staying with me most of the night, gave me up to die. He said if we wanted another doctor it was all right, and if we desired, he would call Dr. Collier soon as he got home. By the time the other doctor came I was some better, and in a few days able to be hauled home.

I must record my appreciation and profound gratitude for the kindness shown me by Drs. Craven and Collier. And another thing I should mention: In my early ministry doctors rarely ever charged me for any kind of service. Sometimes I would be charged for medicine, but in my home town with the exception of Dr. Donnell, I always had to pay the full bill. So it is today. Then, even in those backwoods counties, as they were considered by the more highly favored, the merchants would sell to ministers at cost. But it is not so in my home town. Our miller is an exception. He frequently gives me a sack of flour, chick feed, etc., which I greatly appreciate. And yet he is not a member of the church.

I now had a wife and three children to care for. I never could be contented to sit down in idleness though. I have done lots of things for which I received no pay. If I could not get a living for my family while preaching, I would do something else. I would not beg, nor would I whine.

I think it beneath the dignity of even a gentleman to proclaim to

the world that his wife and children are on the verge of starvation. I have heard preachers from the pulpit say that their folks at home were hungry. Perhaps they told the truth, but it was a reflection on their manhood. It lowered them in the estimation of intelligent people. One does not hear such things now, not much of it at least, but in my early ministry it was common.

God does not require of a minister that his loved ones shall be without the ordinary comforts of life in order that he might preach the gospel to a lot of stingy, gospel-soaked people. Everywhere I have ever gone, and as far back as I can remember, the people have had godly men to minister to them in spiritual things. I have never been to a circuit, no matter how far from the favored centers of civilization, but that others had gone before me. The Watts, the Headleys, and other noted pioneer ministers had left behind them a record of heroic service of self-denial and hardships. With all the privileges and opportunities those people had, but did not improve, they were without excuse. They could easily have provided their preachers with the common comforts of life.

I have heard preachers stand in the pulpit and button up a Prince Albert coat, saying to his hearers, "This coat was once worn by a street railway President." Of course he could afford to wear it, though he should have kept his mouth shut, but his church could not afford to let him do it. Silence on the part of that preacher would have been golden. He certainly lowered the high calling of the ministry by proclaiming to the world the humiliating poverty that necessitated him to wear the cast off clothing of the rich.

Nothing should be done or said by any preacher that would bring contempt upon the ambassadors of high heaven and humiliation to the church of the living God. It were better of Paul to make tents, himself and fellow workers suffering thereby, than that any reproach should fall upon the ministry of Jesus Christ.

A minister should be free so that he can give himself wholly to the work of the church. No minister can do the work of the church as it ought and should be done and be compelled to labor with his hands to support his family, especially as a Methodist traveling preacher.

I was moved from the Licking circuit because one man dominated the church. I did very well in the way of getting a living but had to submit to a humiliating practice in order to get along. A precedent had been established by my predecessors, and I had to fall in line. I either had to submit to it or break it down. The first I did for a time, then concluded to break it down, but in doing so was myself broken and had to move from the circuit when I should have remained another year.

The people were good and kind as they could be, but the preachers had trained them wrong in the matter of paying their quarterage. Most always, when the preacher visited a family, as he was getting ready to leave, the host would put a ham in his buggy or a bushel of something,

and then at the quarterly meeting the value of these articles was counted on quarterage.

The humiliating thing about it was that the preacher must often hint or tell outright his needs and that of his family. Of course there were exceptions to the rule. Anything the preacher needed, if asked for, would be gladly given him, for the people were generous and kind-hearted. Even an outsider, a person not within the pales of the church, would outdo many on the inside in his liberality and generosity.

This method of supporting the ministry had obtained so long that it was regarded as proper and legitimate, but it made the minister to play the role of a mendicant and lowered him in the estimation of the people. I hesitated to do anything that would detract or lessen the dignity of the ministerial calling, so I concluded the custom ought to be changed. Accordingly one Sunday morning I preached from I Thess. 5:11,12: "I beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you. And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." I said:

1. They were to know them in their moral character. They should see that their ministers were men of clean lives.
2. They should see that their pastors were sound in doctrine.
3. They should know of and supply their temporal needs in a manner not humiliating to them.

I told my hearers the way they compelled their minister to forage around, that is, to gather up his supplies, they made him a kind of pauper or beggar and gave them an illustration. I said, "Suppose I go down to Brother A's store and say to him. 'Brother, my children and my wife need shoes or maybe it is something else needful for our comfort! Am I not in the role of the beggar? If Smith or Jones did the same thing--ask the merchant to give him a pair of shoes or his wife a dress--would he not be a beggar? I have had to tell my people I was short of food and other necessities."

The next morning I went down to Brother Blank's store unawares that I had raised a storm, but Oh, my! what a roasting I did get from old Brother So and So, a local preacher and patriarch of the church. He said among other things that I could not bullrag them that way. I am not sure that he spoke for the whole church, though that settled my staying at this place longer than the end of the conference year. Sure enough at the end of the year I was moved to another charge. I said that I was not sure he spoke for the whole church, but at any rate he largely controlled the church in that place. He was an excellent Christian man, honored by the people of the community. The above incident occurred during the last year I was on this circuit.

At the end of my first year there an effort was made to move me to another circuit in order to let a former pastor, the one who had charge

the year before, come back. When I came to the circuit the parsonage was on the outside. No water. No well or cistern. The hogs slept under the house. No garden, and the place looked forlorn indeed. I dug a cistern and fenced the parsonage and garden. The preacher before me had been there two or three years but had made no improvements. I had many friends, and there were no reasons why I should be moved.

At the close of the year my presiding elder told me I would have to move, and that the former pastor would come back. I said no, I would not. He said it was already fixed. I said: "I have done all of these things-- all this repairing and all these improvements, and my children are in school. It is not fair to take me away." I laid the matter before the Bishop at the annual conference, who said: "I have made two lists of the appointments of this conference, and your name is on both lists for your return to the Licking circuit." So I went back notwithstanding the presiding elder said I would not.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PRESIDING ELDERSHIP--TRIED
OBSERVATIONS--LITTLE THINGS
CHILDLESS HOMES
A QUESTION AND ANSWER
A NEW THING UNDER THE SUN

No man is fit for a presiding elder who is, or can be, swayed by just one or two men on a charge; who from favoritism moves a preacher to accommodate his favorite. It is not the office that has fallen into disrepute, but the men in the office. It is indeed a hard and trying thing to put yourself, wife, and children into the hands of a man your inferior in most things--a poor preacher, a bungling administrator who does not know the law of the church. In short, a man who cannot sustain himself as a pastor and most needs be put on a district to give him a place.

With one or two exceptions I never had a presiding elder who was a first-rate preacher. More than once I have been at the point of rebellion when I perceived that my presiding elder had a small estimate of my ability and even disliked me. I had evidence that in his estimation I was far below him from every angle. How is it possible for a self-respecting man who loves his wife and children and is anxious for their welfare to put himself into the hands of such a man? If these men had known how small my estimate of them, they would have been surprised. I am sure, by observing the actions, looks and conversation of some of my brethren that their estimate of my abilities as a preacher was very small, and that I was a perfect pygmy compared to them. Why do I think so? I have good reasons.

One prominent preacher said to me after a conversation I had with him, "How came you to think of those things?" He was always appointed to a station. The impression I got from his remark was that I was not capable of thinking on a subject such as we were discussing. Another prominent member of the conference who had been a college president, a station preacher, and a presiding elder, said to me at the close of a conversation on a very simple subject, "How did you come to think of such things?" On many occasions similar things have been said to me as, "I am surprised at you," "I did not think it was in you," and so on. I would not have said these things to any one, even to the "feeble minded."

I have always had a poor opinion of myself. I have been conscious of my limitations. I know but little, and yet I have tried to delve into things. All I know has been dug out by hard licks. Have always esteemed others, those who were trying to do the right thing, better than myself and have condescended to men of low estate. I never attended school longer than seventy days any one time. I attended Arcadia college from September to sometime the last of December. Have taught five public schools and held second grade certificates issued by the superintendents of schools in three

counties. I never boasted of going to college eight years and pronounced "executive" as "executive" placing the accent on "cu" instead of "e," as I have heard my presiding elder and others do who claimed they were college bred. And I never referred to any living celebrity as "the sainted one."

I have been sung down twice in conference love feasts, both times by a noted patriarch of the church, not that I had talked too long for I had only uttered a few words when the leader began to sing. I think I referred to my wife and in doing so used a word somewhat hyperbolic, at least it was so considered. Afterward my presiding elder told me. I stood for a little while, and the singer kept on. I then sat down not knowing what it was all about.

The second time I was sung down I mentioned something that has always been on my heart--the salvation of my wife and children. I said: "I have a wife and nine children and believe they will all be saved in heaven." The latter part of this statement I did not finish before the leader began singing. I might have come out whole had the patriarch given me time to finish. Ever since that I have been nearly afraid to speak for fear of making blunders. I have heard young preachers now at the top of the conference make the most egregious blunders for which I would have suffered great humiliation. Yet they were permitted to talk on. And they are going ahead while, because of my timidity, I am trailing behind. But I have never gotten over the humiliation of being sung down in the love feasts. The memory of them is still with me.

One might say, "Oh, these are trifles!" True, they are little things. And yet you put together many of these little things and they make a heap. The continuous dropping of water on a stone will in time wear it away. Purity and innocence suffer most. A man who is a man can endure and suffer in silence when no one but himself is involved. When, however, his wife and children are involved he will feel keenly if they are slurred and made to suffer.

Children are the heritage of God. He has set the solitary in families. Men, women, and children are his. All things else were made to minister to them. Hogs, sheep, cattle, silver and gold, copper and iron, earth, air, and the sea, all are the servants of man. They were made for him. But for man they would not have been made.

Any plan of man that frustrates the plans of God given in Eden when He gave to the man a helpmate and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth is an awful sin and will recoil with terrific force on those who are guilty whether they be priest or king, preacher or layman.

It never occurred to me at any time in my life that it was not perfectly proper and right and respectable to have children. I have never found an intimation in God's word limiting the number of children a man and his wife should have. It never entered my mind that my children were a hinderance to me or that the number of them should make any difference as to my acceptability as a minister of Jesus Christ where a charge was able to take care

of a large family. It was quite a while before I perceived or discovered why I was sent to outlying circuits year after year with parsonages in the country--circuits that could not support a single man as he would have to be paid in cash whereas a man with a family could take produce as quarterage. But this was not the sole reason. I was sent to the country charges because my family was large, while the preacher with one or two children was sent to the towns and villages. In the love feast in the big churches in the big towns it was not permissible to speak of having a large number of children. So they sang me down.

My observation in the seventy three years of my life (Brother Robinson is now, 1932, eighty three) is that there are comparatively few barren men and women. I have known a great many married couples who did not have any children. I have known many more who had just one or two after many years of married life. I have known preachers when a child came into their home it was the last one. Childless home are increasing at a fearful rate. The birth rate is decreasing.

The abortionist, let him be who he may, preacher or layman, is a murderer of the most despicable type. The men and the women who resort to prevention and abortion rather than be burdened with children, as they term it, throw themselves in the path of the most withering and blighting curse that can come to evil doers. One great joy of the son of God will be the joy of fruitage: "Behold! I and the children which God hath given me." Heb. 2:13.

To some men and women God may say in that day, "Where are the children?" and they will answer, "We have no children." Then one, two, three, or more children will appear, and God will say, "These are the children you ought to have brought with you but which you murdered. Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Eleven children have come to bless our home and now my wife at the age of seventy years (she is now, 1932, eighty) is hale and hearty with the prospect of living several years to come. Three of our children have crossed over to the other side. Eight are living, five boys and three girls. The boys are sober and industrious and doing well. Two of the girls are married and one is with us. The boys are all married and have nice children. There are forty two of us, counting children, grandchildren, the sons-in-law and the daughters-in-law. All these years that I have lived I never heard anything till recently about birth control.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MINISTRY A CALLING
 ITS FUNCTION AND RESPONSIBILITY
 WHEN THE CHURCH WAS POOR
 RECORD OF GREAT VICTORIES
 COLLECTIONS--QUESTIONABLE METHODS
 RUNNING AWAY FROM MY JOB
 A DISPARITY--CONCLUSION

The ministry is of God's own appointment and not of man's choosing. It is not a profession as law or medicine. It is a calling. And God does the calling. If one goes into the ministry willingly he has a reward, but if against his will a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto him: "Yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel, for of necessity it is laid upon me." I Cor. 9:17. A minister should not entangle himself with the affairs of this world. He ought to be a man of one work. If he is willing to preach the gospel without any earthly compensation he has a reward. His reward is that he is chargable to no man. This, I think, is what Paul meant when he said, "If I preach the gospel willingly I have a reward." I Cor. 9:17.

I often had to turn aside and work with my hands in order to get food and raiment for my wife and children. Having been reared on a farm I naturally turned to the farm. What time I was home from my circuit the boys and I put in the time cultivating corn, potatoes and such other things as we needed to supplement my meager salary. My boys were obedient and good to work. They worked as well when I was absent as when I was present. I did not have to be with them to get work done. Often Charlie in my absence would take the management of affairs in his own hands. I am in doubt as to whether over-work and a lack of proper food, together with a predisposition to pulmonary trouble, were the cause of his premature death. He was a fine boy. He died at the age of twenty five after two years of suffering.

The man called of God to preach the gospel has the right to lead about a wife the same as other men. It is not necessary, nor is he bound, to join the conference. It would not be wise nor best for a man with a large family to join the conference, and the conference should not receive one thus encumbered. It is different, though when a man joins the conference when young and takes upon himself the responsibility of rearing a family. With one or two exceptions all our children were born to us while I was a member of the conference. Celibacy, as taught by the Roman Catholics, is unwarranted and has no authority in the Scriptures.

As previously stated the ministry is a divine calling. Like John, ministers are sent from God. In all the ages of the past He has chosen out of the multitude of men a few to represent Him in the earth. They speak for Him in the things pertaining to His kingdom which is not of this world. They

minister to the people in spiritual values. They are the gospel heralds or messengers to all the world. They are to interpret the Word--an open book to all peoples.

They do not, as the Catholic church teaches, have the sole authority to interpret the Word of God, but they are the teachers of the Word. All questions of doctrines and precept are to be delineated by them in their messages to the people. "Whatsoever they bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This was literally true with the apostles of Jesus Christ. They were inspired men, and what they taught was final as related to both heaven and earth.

Modern ministers are not so inspired, but they are to unfold an inspired book. They are not infallible. They are ambassadors from the throne of God with authority to make known unto the children of men what things are bound (true) and what things are loosed (false.) They are to speak words given to them by the Holy Ghost, words which "bind on earth and in heaven" and that "loose on earth and in heaven." It is the work of preachers to speak the divinely given words to the people. They are not to make a gospel of their own. They must declare a gospel that has been committed unto them.

Surely some preeminence must be accorded to those who have responded to the ministerial calling else they could not come before the people with any authority. They may be ordinary mortals, but they hold a relation to ordinary mortals that is unique and peculiar. They are commissioned men. They are called out from the ordinary walks of men and commissioned to carry a special message to the rest of mankind, a message that has to do with the souls of men. They are drafted for life. Other men can choose what their life work shall be, but not so with the man called of God to preach the gospel. Other men can make choice of a profession and turn away from it to some other profession at their option. Not so with the minister. His work is for life, and there is no release until it is done. If he ceases from work, unless sickness or the infirmities of age make it necessary, he is recreant to his duty, and the "woe is unto me if I preach not to gospel" is upon him.

The man called to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ has a certain degree of authority conferred upon him that other men do not have. Of course this authority is delegated to him and in this he is also unique. We may not be able to explain it, but nevertheless there is a wide gap between him and the laity of the church relative to his calling and work. The minister is closer to God in the administration of the affairs of His kingdom.

With this view of the ministry, how stupendous the responsibility resting on those who preach the gospel to a dying world. Who is sufficient for these things? Many who enter the ministry these days do so, I fear, with but little or no thought of the sacredness of the calling nor of the responsibility they assume. With them it is a profession, as the law or medicine--something at which they can make a living--and thus the sacred calling is degraded.

The evident mercenary character of the present day ministry has brought it into disrepute. It is shorn of its fruitfulness. The "cloth" is not revered as it was in days of yore. The first consideration in going to a new field of labor, as regards some of our preachers, is, "What does it pay?" I say, though I may have to stand alone, yet I say it without hesitation, that the poorly paid ministry, as a rule, is the most fruitful. When the church was poor it was spiritual. No mercenary motive induced the early preachers to go into the ministry. The call of God was upon them. They had a great love, a consuming passion, for lost men, women, and children. The love of Christ constrained them. In response to the divine urge they went without purse or script or hope of material remuneration, and their ministry is a great record of great victories won at the cost of great suffering and sacrifice and self-denial.

High salaries begets softness and needless self-indulgence. The early Methodist preachers are examples of efficiency and fruitfulness in the midst of suffering and hardships and poverty. The church of today is an example of barrenness in the midst of high salaries and untold modern activities. "But what went you out for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment dwell in kings' houses." Soft raiment is a sign of ease and delicacy. These are not the characteristics of a heroic and self-denying ministry.

CASTE

The kingdom of God has nothing in it that savors of caste. God is no respector of persons. "As is the Master, so is his servants." And "he that is great among you, let him be as one that serveth." A Bishop or presiding elder or station preacher is no better in the sight of God than the most obscure circuit preacher. If the obscure circuit preacher does his work faithfully he is entitled to as much honor as the highest dignitary in the church. God looks at the heart and not on outside appearances. There are some preachers whose outward appearances are not inviting, and yet they are pure gold. From what we know of Paul, his bodily presence was "contemptable" and yet no greater soul ever lived on earth except his divine Master. It is painful to see evidences of pride and self-inflation in any minister whether Bishop, presiding elder, station preacher, circuit rider or what not.

The fact that there is caste in our ministry is evident. It cannot be hid. It is big in the human race. That it has crept into the church goes without saying. Where is the divine right or law that gives one class of preachers a larger compensation, denying the same to men of equal talents or even of superior ability in the same calling, the same work, and in the same church? What right have Bishops to receive six thousand dollars per annum while preachers on outlying circuits and missions are only paid two or three hundred dollars? Why should a Bishop be retired on three thousand a year while a majority of the preachers who have served just as faithfully receive only two hundred and fifty and sometimes less? Then why

should the wife of a deceased Bishop receive annually more by far than the wife of an ordinary circuit preacher? Why?

Any why should a presiding elder receive a salary from twenty five hundred to six thousand dollars while their brethren on circuits get only from two to five hundred? It is unjust. It is not the way of man to silently submit to such inequality. The wonder is that Methodist preachers have submitted to it so long. I predict that the time is not far in the future when they will demand a readjustment of the finances of the church. Fact is we have come to the parting of the ways. We have reached the limit. There must, and will, be a change ere long. There must be a dividing up for the sake of equality and justice.

No factor ever entered into my life work more depleting and paralyzing to my zeal and energy and peace of mind than the thought that I must go to my circuit and remain to the end of the conference year with but little compensation, say one hundred and fifty dollars and sometimes not that much, while my loved ones at home had to scrimp and scrimp and go without many of the common comforts of life when my presiding elder and my Bishop were receiving salaries which put them on easy street. Then there were the church editors and church agents and secretaries receiving hundreds and hundreds more than I was getting.

My spirit rebelled and finally I refused to go. What made it all the harder to submit to was that the law of the church required the pastor of each charge to take a collection in each of his churches for what was called the conference collections--the Bishop's fund, foreign and domestic missions, and the rest. The salary of the Bishops and presiding elders and connectional men all depended on the preachers on the circuits and stations. If they failed in these collections these higher (?) up would not get their salaries, hence the stress on getting these collections in full.

The Bishop's fund must be raised so the Bishop could get his salary, the mission money must be raised so the secretaries handling this fund could get theirs, the fund for education raised so the secretary of this interest might get his salary. If the preacher in charge of a circuit or station failed to get his salary in the same ratio, would the presiding elder fail to get his, hence the main question in the quarterly conference was the financial question. "What has been raised?" So it has come to pass that the business of the annual conference is just a business meeting of the preachers.

The discipline requires the preacher in charge of a circuit or station to take a collection for each of the cases above named. If he is on a circuit of eight churches and takes a separate collection for each cause as required he would have to take sixty four collections during the year.

In my early ministry the collections were not stressed as they are now. I was ignorant of much that was required of an itinerant preacher. But it was not long until I was reminded that the conference expected me to bring up my collections in full and a failure to do so was good evi-

dence of my unfitness or unworthiness to be entrusted with a circuit of any importance. The preacher who did not bring up to conference his collections in full, or in the neighborhood of it, was sent to the circuits where there was not much wealth and hence not much loss on the collections. On the circuits where the people were poor, though the pastor worked ever-so hard to get his collections, failure was always the inevitable result. It was hard enough for him to get a living for himself and family to say nothing of the collections.

The burden laid on the ministry in what was called the benevolences became a snare. Some preachers, rather than fail, resorted to questionable ways and means in doing it, namely, church fairs, festivals, selling cakes to highest bidder, taking in money for the prettiest girl or the ugliest man, box suppers, and other things different from the Bible way. Others would lump these different interests and appeal to the pride of the people as a motive to pay in full. All these methods of getting the collections were wrong and in violation of the law of the church in its spirit and intent. It did not educate the people in the act of giving. It did not train them in systematic giving to the Lord's cause. It did not impart to the people any knowledge of what the church was doing in its missionary work nor inculcate in them the missionary spirit. Hence the lack of the missionary spirit in the church at the present time.

They got their collections and were rated successful pastors and promoted while I plodded along according the law of the church, taking a collection for each cause separately most every time I preached but getting only a little each time and would go up to conference and be sent back to repeat the same thing from year to year. Sometimes there was this difficulty: I would be sent to a worse field.

I have all my life been ambitious to succeed at anything I set my hands to do. I have been sensitive--perhaps overmuch so. Failure always hurt me. A feeling of shame and mortification came over me in the consciousness that I had met with failure. Often it was a trying ordeal to face the conference and read my report. I would be tempted to run away from my task. Once I did. Twice I did. Thrice I did. Twice I went back but the last time I did not. Often at night "while good men slept" the thought of collections and the utter impossibility of getting them, and going to conference without them, would come upon me with crushing force and I longed to get away from it all. Then this thought would come to me: "My Bishop, my presiding elder, my church's secretaries, their wives and children have at least the common comforts of life and their children are being educated while I must live on two hundred and fifty dollars and my wife and children be deprived of these common comforts. Also my children were deprived of even a common school education."

When I think of what my boys and girls missed and what they might have been with the benefits of refined society and a college education I conclude that I was foolish in pursuing the course I did. However, it may have been best for my children as I was compelled to put them on a farm where they formed habits of industry and sobriety. They are all sober, respected, industrious and doing well while some of the preachers who received good salaries and good appointments have boys who are not of any great reputation.

CHAPTER XVIII

CENTERVILLE CIRCUIT
MY HEALTH--TWO YEARS ON CRUTCHES
GAVE UP THE WORK--SUPERANNUATION
HOW I HAPPENED TO LOCATE--ON THE FARM
APPLYING FOR READMISSION--TROUBLE IN THE CONFERENCE
THE ADVOCATE--BITTER FEELING--A DEBT OF GRATITUDE
SAMUEL CUPPLES AND RICHARD SCRUGGS
NOTED TRANSFERS--TWO EVENTS--THE WRONG IRISHMAN

From Licking I was sent to the Centerville circuit in very ill health. My first year at Houston I traded my horse and spring wagon for a house with three small rooms which, on going to Licking, I sold for one hundred dollars and bought another nice spring wagon. I managed to buy another horse and went to Centerville with two horses and a spring wagon, but as there was no parsonage and no house to rent I sold the wagon and one of the horses for a piece of land on which was a small log cabin. Around this cabin were four or five acres of cleared land.

My circuit consisted of twelve appointments from twelve to forty miles from my home. Being in poor health, and the labor of putting twenty five or thirty acres of my farm in cultivation, besides preaching twice every Sunday, I broke down completely. After preaching one Sunday morning, I was taken with a violent chill and fever. I was wild and raving for several days. When I have fever I talk and act in a manner that makes those who do not know think I am worse than what I am. I was kindly cared for till I was able to be taken home. It was the second time my wife hauled me home. I did not get able to continue my work on the circuit and the presiding elder supplied for the remainder of the year with Brother M., a local preacher.

With chills and fever I was taken with sciatica rheumatism and had to use crutches for nearly two years. I received very little from the circuit for the time I served it--how much I do not remember--probably about one hundred dollars. We were very destitute. I shall not attempt to tell what was not in our larder. We had little to eat and wear, sufficient, though, to keep us from going naked and hungry.

I concluded to change my place of residence. So we moved to Washington County near the town of Irondale. My brothers, Joseph and William, came after us. However, before I concluded to move, which was sometime after I had given up the circuit, I rigged up a team and bought an old wreck of a wagon. I hired a man to drive and put him to hauling ties, but this enterprise proved entirely a failure. It did not pay expenses. All the use I had for the team was to haul water a distance of four miles. After deciding to go where my folks lived I sold my shanty and land for a mule, two cows and one hundred dollars.